

Jim and Margaret Owen raise corn, beans, and 1800 hogs on their farm near Maxwell, Iowa. The Owens, who have been farming for more than 27 years, also rely on off-farm income to support their family.

The Owens have been working toward their goals of improving water and air quality by implementing a conservation plan on their land for many years. They have been Story County SWCD cooperators since 1984.

In 1995 they built a structure to collect manure runoff from the hog lots and buildings, which were located near a stream. The runoff structure holds solid wastes, but lets water pass through to an adjoining grass strip which filters the water before it reaches the stream.

The Owens continued to implement their conservation plans by building a 24-stall farrowing house and adjoining storage facility in 1998. The farrowing house contains four small pits which catch solid wastes and flush them out to the storage structure.

The Owens received technical assistance from the NRCS and financial assistance from EQIP to build the adjoining storage facility. The 8-foot deep, 50-foot diameter manure storage facility holds approximately 115,000 gallons.

The Owens were very concerned about controlling odors on their operation. “We didn’t want to smell the hogs, and we didn’t want our neighbors to either,” explained Jim Owen. “We worked with local NRCS staff and their construction contractor to design a storage facility that could hold a year’s worth of waste, as we spread and incorporate manure primarily in the fall.” The storage facility also has a low fill opening, which helps contain odors.

The Owens are considering planting cattails near the runoff structure and planting trees near the storage facility. These efforts would further improve both water and air quality.

Dennis Schrodtt, NRCS District Conservationist in Story County says that the Owens have worked hard to conserve all resources on their land.

“The Owens have taken steps to ensure that every part of their operation is environmentally sound,” says Schrodtt. “Besides the waste management systems, they have also installed stream buffers, and used conservation tillage in conjunction with nutrient and pest management practices on their cropland.”

The Owens say EQIP was a great help to them in meeting goals for their resources and operation. “The financial assistance was very appreciated, but knowing this structure was technically sound was also a great benefit,” says Owen. “NRCS helped engineer the structure and was here to help monitor the construction. That gave us the confidence that this storage facility will work and work effectively,” he said. “We’re a small operation, we can’t afford to buy new equipment. EQIP helped us get a sound product that works well.”

**Jim & Margaret Owen,
Story County**

Improving air quality

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Left: Landowners Jim (c) and Margaret (r) Owen review their waste management plan with NRCS Resource Conservationist Larry Beeler (l). Above: Jim and Margaret Owen at their completed waste storage structure.

with technical assistance